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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Friday, December 1, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Winter Pears". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Not so many Fridays ago--along in September--I brought you some news about the big supplies of fresh pears that were on the market at that time. Well, today--three months later--I have more news about pears.

But what I have to say this time is about winter pears--the later varieties --the ones that keep so well in storage that we find them on the market fresh all through the late fall and winter. These winter pears have a lot in common with the better known Bartletts that ripen in the early fall. But while the Bartletts are the beauties of the pear family--these fall and winter pears hide their good qualities beneath a more modest exterior. For that reason, shopping for late pears is a somewhat different proposition than shipping for Bartletts.

But more about that later. Here is the pear news I was speaking of a moment ago. I'm quoting this from a release of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

"Prices for fall and winter pears have been low so far this season. And probably--supplies of winter pears available for domestic consumption will be as large as they were last year--when pear production reached an all-time high in this country.

"The crop of winter pears harvested this year was not quite so large as last year's. But, on the other hand, exports of winter pears have fallen off considerably this season--since the beginning of the European war. For, ordinarily, England and other European countries are the best customers we have for these late pear varieties."

Speaking of winter pear production--that's a very specialized industry in this country. For they can be grown commercially in only a few states where climatic conditions are right. Center of this winter pear industry is located in the three far-western States--California, Oregon, and Washington. There, since about 1920--the industry has been expanding steadily.

Gradually--in that time also--winter pears have become more and more popular with meal planners. And here are a few points about the late varieties that are interesting from the consuming angle.

"The first thing the buyer must establish in her mind as she goes shopping for winter pears is that is is not a good idea to judge by looks alone. For, unfortunately, to look at them, you'd have no idea how mellow--and very juicy, and altogether good to eat they are underneath their skins.

"Another helpful thing to know when buying winter pears is the season of the year when each is at its best. Here are the seasons for the four main varieties of winter pears. If you will notice as I mention the dates-- all are on the market sometime in December.

"First for the Bosc (Bŏsk). This pear is at its best from the first of September to about the fifteenth of December. The Bosc is a large pear with a characteristic long, tapering neck. When it is ready to eat it is yellow with cinnamon brown markings. If you want a pear for baking--try the Bosc--and buy it slightly underripe.

"Another important winter pear is the Comice (Ko-mees'). This is in season from the first of November to the last of January. It is a large pear with a smooth creamy or pale yellow skin. Its flesh is fine-grained and has a characteristic sweet, perfumed flabor. Among pear lovers--the Comice is well-known for its eating quality.

"A good all-round pear and one that keeps for some time is the Anjou

(an-jew')--another large pear with a smooth, creamy yellow skin. The Anjou is in season from the first of November--on up through April.

"And the last of the four main varieties to come into season is the Winter Nelis. This is a small pear. When it is ripe it is green and yellow with various amounts of russetting that give it a mottled appearance. Winter Nelis is in season from the first of December to the last of May."

If you buy pears from one of the large markets--probably you can get them in whatever stage of ripeness you want. That is, the retailer will ripen them as he takes them out of storage. If you want them to eat fresh--he'll have some that are fully ripe. If you want them for cooking--he'll have some not quite ripe.

But probably--you'll have to oversee all or part of this ripening of the winter pears yourself. You may find the directions on the wrapper that comes around the pears--or you may not. But it is important to know how to ripen the pears at home in case you do get some that are not yet fully ripe.

Here's the way to do it.

"Simply let the pears stand at ordinary room temperature--in the dining room or the living room--until they become slightly soft at the stem end, and give gently to the pressure of your fingers. When they are ripe they may also be somewhat lighter in color and more fragrant than they were when you got them. Ripening the pears this way may take from 4 to 5 days. But it is well worth the waiting--when you see the difference that a few days at the right temperature can make in a winter pear just out of storage.

And those are all the pear particulars I have time for today. There's a lot more to be said, of course--especially about how good winter pears are in winter fruit cups--in salads--and cooked in numerous and various ways.

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